

August 19, 2005

Health Advisory: Diarrheal Illnesses Associated with Seneca Lake State Park
Preventing Further Spread of Illnesses at Camps

Please distribute immediately to the Camp Director, Camp Physician/ Health Director, Camp Nurse, Camp Emergency Medical Services, Camp Infirmary Services Staff

Dear Children's Camp Operator:

As you are probably aware from the news media reports, the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) and local health departments are investigating a large outbreak of gastrointestinal illnesses associated with Seneca Lake State Park. As of August 17, 2005, over 740 individuals have reported symptoms. The reported dates of illness range from June to August 15, 2005.

The most common symptoms reported by individuals are diarrhea, abdominal cramping, nausea, vomiting, fever, head ache and loss of appetite. Several of the cases have been confirmed to have cryptosporidiosis, although testing for other possible disease agents is pending. The usual incubation period for cryptosporidiosis is 7 days, but can range from 2 to 14 days. Persons infected with cryptosporidiosis shed the oocysts in stool for an average of 7 days after symptoms resolve.

In the context of this large outbreak and the increase in gastrointestinal illnesses in the community, camps should ensure infection control measures are carefully followed. To help prevent the spread of cryptosporidiosis and other diarrheal illnesses in your facility, camps should do the following:

- Children in day camps who have diarrhea (one or more loose stools) must be sent home and advised to seek medical attention.
 - Children who have recovered from diarrheal illness may return to camp provided that they no longer have symptoms and are counseled regarding careful handwashing practices.
 - One exception is children who are **pre-school aged** and who have been diagnosed with ***E. coli O157, Shigella, or Salmonella***. These children must be excluded until clearance is obtained from the local health department.

- Children in overnight camps who have diarrhea (one or more loose stools) must be excluded from water activities (including swimming and other communal water-based activities) and are advised to seek medical attention. Length of exclusion or the decision to send the child home will depend on results of stool testing and consultation with the local health department. In general:
 - Children who have diarrhea should be excluded from water activities during their illness and for 2 weeks after symptoms resolve.

- Camp staff should ensure that all children practice careful handwashing after each toilet visit and before handling food for themselves or others. Camp staff should ensure that there are adequate supplies of liquid soap and paper towels for handwashing.
- Camps with children who wear diapers should clearly separate diapering and food-handling areas and responsibilities. Disposable gloves should be used when changing diapers, and disposable paper should be used to cover diaper-changing areas.
- If an increase in gastrointestinal illnesses is identified in your camp, water activities should be temporarily suspended, particularly among diapered children. This includes swimming and other communal water-based activities.
- If one or more cases of **cryptosporidiosis** are identified in your camp, enhanced disinfection measures are needed. No disinfectant is guaranteed to be completely effective against *Cryptosporidium*. However, hydrogen peroxide (3%) is usually effective. Camps should clean and disinfect surfaces at least twice daily. Dishwasher-safe toys may be washed in a commercial dishwasher that has a dry cycle or a final rinse that exceed 113F for 20 minutes, or 122F for 5 minutes, or 162F for 1 minute. Cloth toys and towels may be washed and heat-dried in a clothes dryer for 30 minutes.

The camp health director or other health care provider should discuss the symptoms gastrointestinal illnesses with staff and stress the need to report illness to the director at the first sign of the disease. The local health department should be notified immediately of any increases in diarrheal illnesses.

If you have any questions, please contact your local health department. We thank you for your efforts to prevent additional spread of illness in camps.